
INVESTMENT IN AGED CARE MUST INCLUDE HEALTHY OLDER AUSTRALIANS

UnitingCare Australia's National Director, Susan Helyar, has welcomed the Government's commitment to inject significant funding into aged care as part of its health care reform package, but she said more funding must be directed to healthy, ageing Australians.

Speaking shortly after the Prime Minister's announcement this morning, Ms Helyar said preventable problems like falls and the impact of loneliness and isolation also need to be addressed as part of the aged care package. Appropriate housing is central to addressing these issues.

"It makes good social and economic sense to invest heavily in the wellbeing of older Australians, who are healthy, active members of their local communities," Ms Helyar said.

"The right housing systems, support systems and carer systems also need funding to keep older people independent and well for as long as possible.

"The promise of \$739 million will go a long way to alleviating the chronic shortage of facility-based care currently facing older Australians but aged care reform has to be about more than just clearing hospital beds.

"Investment is needed along the whole continuum of care, not just at the end stages when people are so disabled, often by preventable problems, that they have no other options," Ms Helyar said.

On the issue of residential care, Ms Helyar said additional capital for new beds is welcome, but renewal of existing infrastructure also needs investment.

"Australia's growing ageing population is dynamic, engaged and informed. Some are more capable than others, but all quite rightly expect that they will have access to the services that will allow them to maintain their health, their autonomy and dignity.

"The people who use and deliver Australian aged care services are well placed to contribute to the reform process.

"We look forward to talking to decision makers in the crucial weeks ahead in the lead up to COAG and to the release of the terms of reference for the Productivity Commission's inquiry into aged care," Ms Helyar said.

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